



BLM Alaska FRONTIERS

News about BLM-managed
public lands in Alaska

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BLM launches bold plans to finish land transfers by 2009

*Substantial increase in contract surveys,
other changes expected*

Can a program that has consumed 30 years of time and resources possibly be completed in six? The BLM thinks so, and for good reason.

For three decades, the BLM in Alaska has worked diligently to carry out its land transfer responsibilities under the Native Allotment Act, the Alaska Statehood Act, and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Until recently, the goal was to complete all conveyances by the year 2020. Congress asked the BLM to move this up, and has taken the first steps to provide the BLM with the tools to do so.

An idea gains momentum

Last fall, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton and BLM Director Kathleen Clarke met with the CEO's of several Alaska Native corporations. The CEO's expressed concerns about the pace of land transfers to Alaska Natives.

So BLM-Alaska State Director Henri Bisson asked BLM conveyance and survey managers to look at ways to accelerate the process. Special assistant Brenda Zenan explains: "We needed to find ways to speed up specific processes, so we started by talking to our customers."

Zenan and former Cadastral Survey manager George Oviatt met with staff from the Alaska Congressional delegation, Alaska Native organizations, conservation groups, industry, the State and other federal agencies to discuss innovative ideas and to get feedback on the land transfer process.

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BLM realty specialist Shirley Rackley takes a GPS reading during a field exam at an Alaska Native allotment near Aniak. BLM will perform many such field exams during the next six years as the agency increases the pace of Alaska Native allotments and other land transfers.

Earlier this year, the Office of Management and Budget directed the BLM to develop a plan to complete the Alaska land transfer program by 2009. In March, Congress requested that BLM draft legislation with provisions that would accelerate the land transfer process. And in late July, Sen. Lisa Murkowski introduced S. 1466, *The Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act of 2003*.

BLM-Alaska State Director Henri Bisson presented testimony for the Interior Department at a field hearing Aug. 6 in Anchorage.

"The rapid completion of all Alaska land entitlements and the establishment of land ownership boundaries are essential to the proper management of all lands and resources in Alaska," Bisson explained. "This bill would provide the BLM with the necessary tools to complete the transfers by 2009."

The changes proposed in S. 1466 eliminate many of the delays that currently exist in the adjudication and conveyance process. The legislation, when enacted, would authorize an Alaskan hearings and appeals process to resolve land transfer disputes and conflicts. It would also set final conveyance priorities, simplify entitlement calculations, and eliminate costly title recovery practices.

Next steps

BLM's conveyance team is putting together a detailed work plan to help us get to '2009.'

"We're reviewing our processes with the goal of finding legally-sound ways to streamline them," explains BLM conveyance manager Gary Reimer. "We're also looking for appropriate and expeditious ways of handling large blocks of cases."

Reimer's team is also coordinating with BLM's field offices on vital work products such as completing ANCSA 17(b) easements and field reports that support the conveyance goals.



Teresa McPherson

The new BLM conveyance management team: (front row) Ann Johnson, Sharon Warren, Ramona Chinn and Johanna Munson. Back row: Krissell Crandall, Dick Thwaites, Gary Reimer and Linda Resseguie.

While Reimer's team develops a work plan for conveyances, BLM's Cadastral Survey Division is gearing up for a land survey blitz unlike anything Alaska has seen. Typically, BLM devotes \$6 million each year to cadastral survey contracts. But in 2004, that figure could jump to \$16 million per year, bringing a substantial increase in contracting dollars for Alaska survey firms.

"We're going to have a lot more survey plats coming through the door," says BLM survey manager Gust Panos.

"Time to wrap this up..."

Project 2009 is an ambitious undertaking, but Bisson, Zenan, Reimer, Panos and an experienced and energetic team of BLM adjudicators and land surveyors plan to deliver.

"Completing the land transfer program by 2009 is one of our top goals," says Bisson. "It's time to wrap this up so BLM, the State, and Alaska Native landowners can move ahead with their long-term management goals for Alaska lands."

—Teresa McPherson

"2009"

legislation at a glance

If passed by Congress in its current form, *The Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act of 2003* would:

- finalize a list of pending Native allotment applications;
- simplify title recovery, acreage calculations and survey requirements;
- streamline procedures for making land available to underselected villages;
- streamline conversion of mining claims affected by land transfers;
- establish a local appeals board to resolve land transfer disputes and conflicts;
- authorize BLM to classify public land for various uses.

A complete copy of the legislation and a detailed BLM summary are available on the BLM-Alaska homepage: www.ak.blm.gov

Resource Advisory Council gets northern exposure

Each year the BLM's Resource Advisory Council leaves the conference room behind to head out to the field for a glimpse of rural Alaska.

The council spent two full days in July touring the Dalton Highway and the communities of Wiseman and Coldfoot. The council held a community meeting in Wiseman to talk with residents about issues of local concern, such as subsistence harvests and development along the Dalton Highway.

The council members also visited the UAF research station at Toolik Lake and the new Arctic Interagency Visitor Center at Coldfoot.

Council members look forward to their annual field tour and the chance to meet with residents of local communities who depend on BLM-managed public lands.

"I think it would be a huge disservice to sit in a conference room and advise BLM on issues and resources and communities we have never visited," explains council member Sandra Key, a consultant for the Nature Conservancy of Alaska.

Council member Gary Gustafson of BP Exploration agrees: "There's simply no substitute for first-hand field experience where we can interact directly with affected communities."

Issues raised by local residents during the field tour will become part of the Resource Advisory Council's agenda for future meetings. For more information on the council, visit www.ak.blm.gov.

—Teresa McPherson



Teresa McPherson

Prior to the trip, some of the council members got a behind-the-scenes look at Fort Knox Gold Mine northeast of Fairbanks.



Teresa McPherson

(above) Council members stop by the home of Jack Reakoff during a walking tour of Wiseman. Earlier the council met with local residents at the Wiseman community center.



Teresa McPherson

(left) BLM natural resource specialist Linda Billingsley (center) explains reclamation techniques at a placer mining operation on the Hammond River.



sleepless on the Toz

From a wind-swept bluff above the Tozitna River, the weir stands out as an unnaturally-straight, gray line among the sweeping meanders of the river and the jagged skyline of the distant Ray Mountains. Closer up, from the log-strewn riverbank, it looks like a tall, wavy picket fence that has been pushed over by the river's considerable current.

The weir stretches 220 feet from bank to bank, temporarily blocking passage of salmon that have traveled 50 river miles up the Tozitna from its confluence with the Yukon River near the village of Tanana. These fish are nearing their spawning areas after a long voyage.

BLM was able to establish the Tozitna project, as well as a similar weir on Clear Creek, with part of a Congressional appropriation for salmon restoration. Project manager Tim Sundlov explained how the project originated three

years ago amid concerns over declining chum salmon runs in the Yukon River. "At the time there weren't any weir monitoring projects on middle Yukon tributaries like the Tozitna," Sundlov said. "Fisheries managers needed an index stream to provide information on the timing and the escapement* for summer chum salmon and chinook salmon runs. Weirs provide the most accurate data available for assessing escapement of a mixed stock fishery."

Information collected during the five- to seven-year project should give fisheries biologists a good picture of the numbers, age distribution, size and health of salmon returning to spawn in the Tozitna. Sundlov's data will be combined with data from a handful of other weirs recently established on Yukon tributaries to provide managers with data on which to base management decisions.

"Data from the weir provide a tool—you might say a report card—for evaluating fisheries management actions on the Yukon," Sundlov said.

One of those actions is the annual determination of how many fish can be harvested by commercial fishing on the lower Yukon. That decision, partly based on an estimation of how many salmon are coming up the river, is intended to maintain or increase the health, genetic diversity

and long-term sustainability of the salmon runs. However, the poor-to below-average salmon runs in recent years and resulting competition for salmon between users often make such decisions intensely political.

Trapped

Fish politics seem far away when you're sitting on the riverbank on a sunny afternoon watching the Tozi's clear water gush through the weir panels. It's a mesmerizing sight. Then the slap of a jumping salmon breaks the reverie.

When the salmon are running, the weir's trap is where most of the action takes place. A square chute leads fish upstream through the weir and into the trap, a coffin-shaped cage the size of a small car.

Sampling normally requires three people. Two people stand in thigh-deep water inside the trap. Working in a cramped space among nets, sampling equipment, and powerful salmon requires impressive coordination. The samplers must work carefully because any equipment dropped in the trap is instantly swept away by the strong current pushing through the slatted walls.

The two samplers measure each



Tim Sundlov grabs a chinook salmon from a landing net during sampling in the trap.



salmon's length, determine its sex, and collect scales (for age composition) and tissue (for genetics research). The third person holds the fish in a submerged, aluminum cradle during sampling and then carries the fish to a nearby recovery pen. There the salmon recover their strength before their release and continued journey upstream.

Every day Sundlov and his assistants sample 30 to 40 chum salmon and 30 to 40 king salmon. After the day's sampling quota has been met, salmon are simply identified by species and counted as they pass through a door in the trap.

As long as the weir remains "fish tight"—the crew constantly looks for holes and gaps caused by the river's current or by changing water levels—every salmon coming up the Tozitna will be counted.

Open All Night

Life for the weir crew revolves around six-hour shifts at the weir. During the salmon run the weir is staffed 24 hours a day to minimize delays in the salmon's migration. This effort is made easier by the interior's round-the-clock daylight during June and July.

As project leader and chief sampler, the bleary-eyed Sundlov works an especially punishing schedule. "I get interrupted sleep—to bed at 1 or 2 a.m. and back up at 7 a.m.," Sundlov said.

During a typical shift, Sundlov and his crew don chest waders and cross back and forth along the weir removing wooden debris. When enough fish accumulate in the trap, they wade out to sample fish. After sampling it's back to the campfire to warm up and recover from the Tozitna's cold water.

Student Conservation Association (SCA) volunteer Matt Churchman said the sound of the river and the beautiful setting make his shifts at the weir a pleasure.

"It's real quiet when I'm here in the morning. You can hear everything—when a chum gets



Craig McCaa

caught on the weir and thrashes around, I hear it."

Churchman's fellow SCA volunteer, the gregarious Arthur Niven, hails from Derry, Northern Ireland, where his family has been involved in various aspects of fisheries work for generations. Niven said tedium is not a problem during his many hours at the weir. "I haven't been bored on a shift yet. There's plenty to do, whether it's cleaning the weir or checking the trap or sampling."

As with most fieldwork, routine is periodically upset by unexpected events, like the mid-June flood that slammed a big tree into the trap, ripping it from its anchoring cables and sending it tumbling downstream. During several long days of grueling work, the crew managed to winch the trap onto the riverbank, repair damaged parts, and install it back in its proper place. "The crew walked on the moon," said Sundlov, commenting on the crew's success in having the weir fish-tight and operational within 72 hours.

In addition to the two SCA volunteers, rotating crew members include a fisheries biologist and technician from the Tanana Chiefs Conference, a tribal consortium of the 43 villages of Interior Alaska, as well as two fisheries technicians from the Tanana Tribal Council, which is a cooperator on the project.

Last year Sundlov and his crew counted 1,596 chinook and 19,038

(above) Arthur Niven cleans debris from the weir. (below) Tim Sundlov preparing genetics samples.



Craig McCaa

summer chum salmon. So far, chum escapement is below that of last year, while chinook escapement is slightly higher. Again this year the chinooks passing through the Tozitna weir show a perplexing preponderance of males, a gender imbalance with implications for the future productivity of the run. In Alaska this lack of females sounds oddly familiar.

—Craig McCaa

* Escapement is the number of fish that successfully return to the spawning grounds.



Valdez Creek quietly turns 100

Little-known mining area reaches centennial mark

On August 15, 1903, a group of determined prospectors found gold in Valdez Creek, flowing west out of the Alaska Range mountains, about 100 miles east of Mount McKinley. Their discovery started a 100-year-long mining tradition in the region which continues today.

Valdez Creek, a tributary of the Susitna River, is located in central Alaska northeast of milepost 81 on today's Denali Highway. In 1903, however, this area was remote and not yet widely explored by westerners.

1903's lucky prospectors were four experienced miners, J. C. Clarkson, John M. Johnson, and James S. Smith, led by 38-year-old Peter Monahan, a veteran of both the Klondike and Nome gold rushes. They set out from Valdez in February 1903, determined to find gold. During the following six months, they explored various parts of the Copper River Valley and then the streams running southward from the Alaska Range.

While some traces of gold were found, it was not until they panned a creek first called "Galina," an anglicized version of an Athapaskan name, that they made their big strike. Rich gold was found in gravel four feet down on bedrock. To commemorate their bonanza, they named their claim "Discovery," and renamed the stream "Valdez" in



Early mining was done by hand, but heavy equipment and large-scale mining operations were necessary later to reach the deeper deposits. (top) Peter Monahan

honor of their hometown. When the party finally returned to Valdez in September, they had the equivalent of more than \$50,000 in gold dust and nuggets and countless stories to tell.

The next year, Monahan and party returned for more mining in Valdez Creek, but this time they were followed by scores of other miners hopeful of finding their own bonanzas. By the end of the summer, much of Valdez Creek was staked and the most productive, shallow placer deposits were claimed. While lots more gold would be found in later years, it was soon determined that the shallower gold placer deposits were limited and extracting gold from the deeper deposits would be more difficult.

At best, mining in Valdez Creek in the early years was not easy. Most of the region is around 3,000

feet in elevation or higher. This meant that timber was scarce and had to be hauled in along with supplies at considerable expense and effort. Pack trains hauling gear, food and other supplies into Valdez Creek began at the coastal town of Valdez. From there, it was northward along the Valdez-Fairbanks Military Trail which later became the Richardson Highway.

Within the first few years of mining in Valdez Creek, several hundred hardy prospectors had come into the area, with most only working in the summer and then leaving for winter quarters elsewhere.

After the shallower placer gold deposits were worked out, many of the miners moved on.

At that time, underground mining was becoming the predominate method for gold extraction in the



Valdez Creek Mine

lower part of Valdez Creek in the vicinity of the rich earlier claims. The various hand-dug shafts and adits were tapping into the rich “Tammany Channel” of gold. It had been deposited by a prehistoric river flowing out of the Alaska Range, and finding its source (which arguably never happened) would haunt the earlier miners.

Yet, ironically, as rich as it was, more gold from still another, usually deeper, ancient river channel would go largely unnoticed for many decades. That eventually would become the focus of large-scale mining in Valdez Creek in the later 20th century, long after the earlier miners were gone.

Called the “A Channel,” this rich gold-bearing deposit would become the target of a large open pit mine in the late 1980s and early 1990s operated by the Cambior mining company of Canada. At its deepest, the operation would mine around 300 feet below the surface using massive mining equipment. In its best years, that company’s gold production would reach 70,000 ounces per season. It was the richest and largest gold operation of its time in Alaska. Though the claims worked by Cambior are now mined out and were reclaimed by the mid-1990s, gold still exists in the drainage—and probably lots of it.

By the 1910s, if not earlier, some of the Ahtna men were working seasonally for wages for white miners in the underground mines at



John Babel and fellow miners beside his rock cabin above Lucky Gulch Creek.

Robert King



The Denali Post Office, one of the few remaining reminders of the historic mining area.

Valdez Creek. By that time, a Native settlement of log cabin houses was developing just south of the white settlement. Both areas were never laid out with formal streets or resembled a “normal” town since many people only lived there seasonally. During the summer, many of the white miners occupied tents pitched wherever they could find level ground, adding to the unorganized look of the camp.

The white and adjoining Native settlement made up the lively, if mostly seasonal, mining settlement in Valdez Creek first called Mount McKinley, and later renamed Denali in 1922. Some of the original Denali settlement area and cabins were destroyed or mined away in the later 20th century, though the old log cabin post office from the early 1900s still remains on an unmined side hill near the old Denali cemetery.

In 1931, John Babel, an Estonian immigrant, and his mining partners built a rock cabin above Lucky Gulch Creek, the remains of which still survive as testimony to the determined prospectors who worked the rich gold deposits in the Valdez Creek drainage. By the early 1930s, mining in part of the drainage, like elsewhere in Alaska, had changed. The era of individual miners and their partners working their claims alone already had given way in the lower part of the Valdez Creek drainage to larger scale operations

financed from outside the region.

Hydraulic mining had been unsuccessful as early as 1908 in Valdez Creek but was revived in the 1910s when Boston capitalists, who had bought out many of the claims along Valdez Creek, built the previously mentioned water ditch and pipeline system. By the end of 1914, Eastern interests had invested more than \$250,000 in the purchase of gold claims, labor and equipment in hopes of extracting even more gold from the region by massive hydraulic placer mining. More development occurred during 1915-1916, and by 1917, a two-story company-owned bunkhouse housing 24 men and a dining hall to seat 35 was built.

By the early 1920s, the returns from the massive outside investment apparently fell short of expectations and the company was sold to other investors. Still the “company mining” era in the lower part of the Valdez Creek drainage continued but under different owners until mining was shut down in 1942 soon after the start of World War II. Yet throughout this period and even today, some smaller operations continued, with John Babel and his partners working their claims in Lucky Gulch off and on into the mid-1950s.

In the mid-1980s, when I first visited Valdez Creek, mining was

concluded on page 8

Tok BLMers join Canadians for international cleanup

In late June, Tok Field Office employees joined Canadian colleagues for an international river cleanup trip on the Fortymile River, which flows from Alaska into Yukon Territory before joining the Yukon River.

During the eight-day float, five Americans and two Canadians removed trash from 7 miles of river on the American side and 16 miles on the Canadian side, down to the Clinton Creek bridge.

Realty technician Kevan Cooper had approached several Canadian agencies in Dawson City, Yukon with the idea of the joint float trip before finding Janet Bell and Georgette McLeod, both with Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation.

"I'm glad Janet and Georgette came along. We learned a lot about the different governing bodies of Canada and how they operate. The two Canadians were a lot of fun and hard workers."

McLeod, a heritage researcher, said discussions with her American colleagues had taught her more about the different land status and regulatory environment on the U.S. side of the border. She was surprised to learn, for example, that BLM manages a land corridor along Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River but not the surrounding lands or the waterway itself. "That was kind of different," she said.

For McLeod the trip also had a satisfying personal dimension. "It was nice to go on the Fortymile," she said. "My ancestors used to travel through this area." McLeod shared with the crew information she had learned about her great-grandmother's travels through the Fortymile region along a traditional route between the Yukon River and villages in the Alaskan interior.

Rusted-out 55-gallon drums, often submerged and filled with gravel, accounted for much of the crew's cleanup efforts. But they occasionally retrieved more interesting finds like car door handles and fishing lures. Cooper motivated the crew by awarding prizes in



The cleanup crew posing at a U.S.-Canada border monument.

different trash categories such as largest item, most unexpected item, and most reusable item.

Some of the trash was placed on a large raft, the 'trash barge,' that Cooper towed behind his own raft. Additional trash was cached next to the river for removal this winter.

Asked whether the trash on the Canadian side appeared to have floated downstream from the U.S., McLeod laughed and graciously pointed out that the crew found a discarded water bottle that was clearly of Canadian origin.

—Craig McCaa

Valdez Creek, *continued from page 7*

continuing throughout much of the drainage, with the big Cambior open pit placer operation soon to appear. At that time, I was also in contact with people who recalled meeting some of the earlier miners, including John Babel. My favorite of all the older mining-related structures in the drainage today are the remains of his old rock cabin.

Since I have come to know the Valdez Creek region, much has changed. This includes the creation of a large lake in upper Valdez Creek from reclamation done at the closing of the giant Cambior mining operation in the mid-1990s. Despite the changes, Peter Monahan and the other discoverers would still find parts of the drainage familiar despite 100 years of mining. And it is likely that gold production from Valdez Creek will continue well past this centennial of the first discovery of gold in this part of the state.

—Robert King



The expedition removed a "raft of trash" from the river.

There for the birds

BLM biologist Bruce Seppi took advantage of a bird banding project in Unalakleet this summer to give local children a demonstration. He explained to the young group the need to band birds to track them and forward the information to a large national database managed by the U.S. Geological Survey. The USGS tracks bird population trends.

With the help of his young pupils, the group set up a mist net in forested vegetation to catch birds; walked the net looking for any captured birds and learned to safely release the birds from the net.

The early June adventure netted only two birds: a Wilson's warbler and a slate-colored junco. But this was enough for Seppi to slip the bands around the birds' legs and allow the eager students a chance to learn how to listen to the unique songs that various birds sing and to identify the species from the songs. The banks are numbered; this allows Seppi to track the bird's migration and mortality, or in the case of one particular grey jay, learn that it does not migrate but lives in an area around BLM's Old Woman Cabin farther up the Unalakleet River.

No bird banding demonstration is complete without an important caution. "I told them not to go home and try to catch birds," Seppi said. He emphasized that besides causing stress and potentially harming netted birds, federal law requires that bird banders have a banding permit issued by the USGS.

Besides the demonstrations, Seppi's actual breeding bird survey



(top) Bruce Seppi, BLM Anchorage Field Office biologist, demonstrates bird banding techniques to a small group of children from the Native village of Unalakleet.

(bottom left and right) Youth examine a slate colored junco.



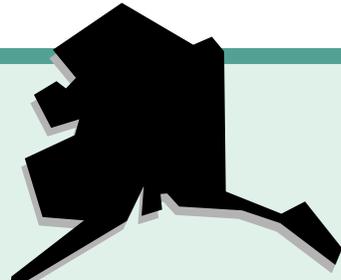
project in this area covered 25 miles from where the Old Woman River flows into the Unalakleet River. Every half mile for 25 miles, he recorded the number and species of birds.

Unalakleet, 395 miles northwest of Anchorage and 148 miles southeast of Nome, is located at the mouth of the Unalakleet River.

—Donna Gindle

Photos by
Dave Doucet





Frontier Flashes

RECENT NEWS FROM AROUND ALASKA



BLM breaks ground for new firefighters housing

BLM National Director Kathleen Clarke was present August 12 at a ground-breaking ceremony beginning construction of the Alaska Fire Service's new seasonal and temporary housing facility on Fort Wainwright.

The new \$15-million facility will be a 70,000-square-foot building with room for 240 personnel and the capability to temporarily accommodate an additional 150, making it the Interior Department's largest fire facility construction project in years. Current facilities date back to the 1940s and do not meet health and safety codes or accessibility standards.

Butler Construction is the prime contractor and plans call for the building to be ready before the 2005 fire season. Alaska Fire Service facilities accommodate transient firefighters, cooperator employees and the military during the winter months.

East Alaska RMP update

The Glennallen Field Office will release a newsletter updating progress on the East Alaska Resource Management Plan. Call (907) 822-3217 to be included on the mailing list. The newsletter will also be posted on the field office website: www.glennallen.ak.blm.gov under the link to land use planning.

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group receives national recognition

BLM's National Director, Kathleen Clarke, presented the Directors 4 C's Award to the Western Arctic Caribou Working Group August 12 in a ceremony in Fairbanks. Chairman Raymond Stoney of Kiana accepted the award on behalf of the working group. The award comes in recognition of the group's work on an innovative, cooperative management plan for Alaska's largest caribou herd.

"Under Raymond Stoney's leadership, this group has pulled together a real coup in terms of being able to get such a diverse group of people together. And it's not just subsistence people and agency people—we're talking about reindeer herders, guides, and air taxi operators too" said BLM's Northern Field Manager Bob Schneider.

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd's range covers an area about the size of Montana. The working group's meetings have provided a rare opportunity for



BLM Director Kathleen Clarke presents working group chairman Raymond Stoney with the Director's 4 C's Award.

Craig McCaa

people from remote communities to come together to discuss caribou-related issues.

Stoney said that keeping the region's residents informed about the management plan was particularly important. "We wanted everyone to know what we started and what we accomplished," he said.

The working group meets twice a year, publishes a biannual newsletter, maintains a website, and works with other advisory committees and groups within Alaska.

BLM, State reach agreement on bonding pool for small miners

BLM and the State of Alaska have reached final agreement for Alaska miners to continue using the State Bonding Pool to meet federal reclamation insurance requirements.

"It is almost impossible for our small Alaska miners to obtain affordable insurance through private companies so this is a significant accomplishment. It is the only such agreement anywhere in the country and sets an example of what can be accomplished when BLM, industry and state government work together," said BLM-Alaska State Director Henri Bisson.

The agreement, approved by Department of the Interior lawyers in Washington, D.C., was formally signed August 5, 2003, in a ceremony in Anchorage.

More than 90 percent of the mining operations in Alaska are placer operations. These operations had been operating under a temporary arrangement that would have expired this winter, leaving open the possibility that the miners would not have been able to continue operating.

State of Alaska files additional Recordable Disclaimer applications

On July 18, 2003, the State of Alaska filed with BLM four applications for recordable disclaimers of interest on several navigable waterbodies. These applications will be added to the state's first application for the Black River filed Feb. 18, 2003. The newest applications include nine rivers and eight lakes and affect the Klutina River, Klutina Lake, Kvichak River, Kvichak Lake, Lake Iliamna, Tazlina River, Tazlina Lake, and the Wood River and associated lakes in the Nugashak drainage.



Three NPR-A plans underway

BLM will hold six public scoping meetings in October to help determine issues and public concerns for amending the land use plan for 4.6 million acres in the **northeast NPR-A**. The existing plan was completed in October, 1998.

Public meetings are scheduled as follows: Anchorage (Oct. 7, BLM Anchorage Field Office), Fairbanks (Oct. 8, Noel Wien Library), Nuiqsut (Oct. 14, Kisik Community Center), Barrow (Oct. 16, NSB Assembly Chambers), Atkasuk (Oct. 17, Village Community Center), and Anaktuvuk Pass (Oct. 28, Community Hall).

Public scoping comments will be accepted through Oct. 31, 2003. For detailed information, see the BLM website: <http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/npra>.

The Final Northwest NPRA Resource Management Plan and EIS is at the printer and will be distributed in late November. For more information, check the BLM website: <http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/npra/nwnpra>.

The Draft Alpine Satellite Development EIS will be available in January, followed by a public comment period. A schedule of public meetings will be published in the next edition of *Frontiers*. Additional information is on the web at: www.alpine-satellites-eis.com.

Frontier People



George Oviatt is BLM-Alaska's new Deputy State Director for Resources, Lands and Planning. Oviatt, a 31-year veteran, has been the head of BLM-Alaska's Cadastral Survey program since 1992.



Ramona McCoy

BLM-Alaska State Director Henri Bisson (right) discusses lands issues with Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton (center) at BLM's Brushkana Campground. Norton visited throughout Alaska in August and included stops at the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District and Paxson Lake. Norton was particularly interested in the agency and industry response to last November's 7.9 magnitude earthquake along the Denali Fault and received briefings at Pump Station 10. The fault crosses beneath the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and Norton inspected the area by helicopter.

Alaska prescribed burn to improve wildlife habitat

The Glennallen Field Office, in conjunction with the Alaska Fire Service and the State of Alaska, conducted a prescribed fire in the Alphabet Hills area in late July. The burn, located south of the east end of the Denali Highway and north of the east end of the Glenn Highway, had been planned for several years before conditions finally met the prescription to burn. The fire successfully burned over 5,000 acres and established a partial perimeter around the intended burn area. The purpose of the fire is to improve wildlife habitat. Burn efforts will resume when the area falls into prescription again.

Volunteers needed for National Public Lands Day event:

The Anchorage Field Office (AFO) is hosting a National Public Lands Day event on Sept. 20 at the Campbell Creek Science Center. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.; volunteers will participate in Campbell Tract improvement projects from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and refreshments will be served from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. An open house at the Science Center will immediately follow. (Contact: Jeff Brune, 907-267-1247.)

Susitna Dam project documents now available at ARLIS

One hundred thirty million dollars was spent studying the feasibility of building a dam on the Susitna River in the 1980s. The information, gathered in more than 3,000 documents, was catalogued this summer as part of a special congressional appropriation.

"The reports include an incredible breadth of materials on topics such as gas bubble disease in fish, big game studies, aquatic studies, potential power opportunities, environmental assessments, and even the effects of the dam on bush pilots," said librarian Cathy Vitale.

All of the reports from this effort can be obtained from the Alaska Resources Library and Information Services (ARLIS) in Anchorage or through interlibrary loan at local libraries. For more information, contact ARLIS at (907) 272-7547.

"ARLIS is the mother lode of Alaska resources information. It is a library devoted to collecting information on all sides of an issue so that everyone can be equally well informed as public policy decisions are made," says Vitale.

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